



Animal Rescue Team Updates

Judging from the dog hair crusted around the wire doors, the cages had been shut for a while. But they finally swung open in late March, as Humane Society International helped Quebec authorities remove 125 dogs from a commercial breeding operation. They included 2-week-old shih tzu puppies (above), whose eyes—fittingly—didn't open fully until after the rescue.

Another chapter in the largest cat rescue in HSUS history closed in late March, as the owners of the now-defunct Haven Acres Cat Sanctuary in Alachua County, Fla., pleaded no contest to 47 counts of animal cruelty. The HSUS helped shepherd the case, starting with the rescue of 697 cats from the property last June (including Velcro, the May/June *All Animals* cover model). The owners now face 15 years of probation, restitution fees, a prohibition on keeping cats, and court-ordered mental health treatment.

In the wake of an undercover HSUS investigation into the soring of Tennessee walking horses ("To the Rescue," May/June), *Nightline*, CNN, and other outlets aired some of the disturbing footage of trainers beating horses and applying caustic chemicals to their hooves in order to exaggerate their gaits and win prizes. PepsiCo subsequently dropped its sponsorship of the walking horse industry's annual show, and trainer Jackie McConnell and two associates also pleaded guilty to charges in the case.

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NAME: Champion Sam

CASE HISTORY: Rescued from a Jacksonville, Fla., dogfighting operation

For this old survivor, retirement was a dark, lonely life in a dilapidated backyard cage.

When HSUS responders found Sam during a Feb. 29 dogfighting raid in Jacksonville, he was missing his upper lip and portions of his bottom one. Extensive scarring on his face, chest, and legs testified to a life in the ring.

"It was truly heartbreaking," says Janette Reeve, HSUS deputy manager for animal fighting investigations. Sam's wooden cage—padlocked shut, lacking proper ventilation, sunken into the dirt—was likely a "hot box" during the summer months in Florida, she says.

Though hesitant at first to emerge, Sam "was a true gentleman the whole time," says Reeve. "You could tell he wanted to come out, but he was a little bit nervous. And when we did take him out, he kind of leaned into our arms. It's as if he knew that he was being rescued."

It was the first glimpse into the heart of a dog who has since endeared himself to a long line of rescuers and rehabbers. And for Sam, it was the first of many big steps forward.

After weeks with Jacksonville Animal Care and Protective Services, he's now moved on to Hello Bully rescue in Pittsburgh, where staff members are patiently preparing him for adoption. He loves meeting new people, consistently choosing human interaction over toys or even food. He asks for attention with a full-body wiggle. He's quick to climb into a lap. And staff members have been amused by his preference for dandelion greens over more traditional dog treats.

He's also shown promise interacting with other dogs through a fence.

"We're all kind of in love with him at this point," says Daisy Balawejder, Hello Bully president and coordinator of The HSUS's Dogfighting Rescue Coalition. "We just look at this dog, and we're constantly in awe and enamored with how sweet and amazing his soul is."


— **Michael Sharp**



Sam with The HSUS's Janette Reeve



To the Rescue

A photograph of a white cockatoo with a yellow crest perched on a metal cage bar. The bird is looking towards the left. In the background, there are other cages and people in blue shirts, likely rescuers, in a large indoor facility.

A cockatoo missing about a quarter of her feathers perches on a cage as rescuers survey the scene. Parrots in captivity often resort to feather plucking out of boredom or frustration.



LOCATION: Moraine, Ohio

ANIMALS SAVED: More than 130 parrots

The air inside Wings Over the Rainbow parrot facility was thick with the stench of rodent feces and urine. A cacophony of squawks greeted HSUS responders, veterinarians, and bird handlers as they arrived to remove the animals from a storefront in May.

The Humane Society of Greater Dayton had asked The HSUS to assist in the rescue after receiving complaints about the facility, which had been operating as a nonprofit parrot rescue. Many of the birds appeared to be suffering from longstanding injuries and ailments: a cockatoo missing his entire upper beak, a conure who had to walk on her ankles, dozens of nearly featherless birds. Others lacked access to clean water, fresh food, or enrichment. A pair of macaws in a barren cage clung to each other, peering out defensively while rescuers assessed the conditions.

One by one, the team carefully transferred the birds from cages to carriers, then onto the rescue vehicle headed for the emergency shelter. It was the first deployment of its kind for The HSUS, says animal cruelty investigations director Adam Parascandola, and it presented a set of unique challenges—and opportunities.

“We routinely can deal with 200 to 300 dogs, but for this situation we were really starting from scratch,” he says. Weeks before the rescue, the team consulted with bird veterinarians and experts to gather avian-specific medical equipment, plus 24 pallets of cages, food, and toys from PetSmart Charities.

“Frankly, we like a challenge,” Parascandola says. “We felt like it was important to respond and help this agency.”

Once at the emergency shelter, the birds seemed to settle in quickly. Cockatoos cooed at shelter workers when they passed their cages, saying “hi” and “I love you.” That sociability and intelligence have long ensnared parrots in the pet trade, with many of them ending up homeless or in substandard conditions for much of their long lives.

Would-be buyers are often uninformed about the steep challenges to keeping parrots happy in captivity—the time, the space, the patience—and many owners simply relinquish their birds when it all becomes too much. The result is a crisis of unwanted parrots, exacerbated by unrestricted breeding for the pet trade. What’s really going to change the game, Parascandola says, is “more outreach to the public in terms of what’s going on with birds in this country.” He hopes rescues like this one are a good place to start. — **Katie Carrus**